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DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-NINTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 29 April 1991, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. HOHENFELLNER (Austria)

- Statement by the Chairman

- Reports by chairmen of working groups

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The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

The CHAIRMAN: The Disarmament Commission concluded the first phase of its work for the current session during the first two days, and a large number of delegations participated in the general exchange of views. Thereafter, the Commission embarked on the second phase of its work, and all four working groups began their deliberations on the respective agenda items. During the course of deliberations, various views were expressed and proposals made by delegations on the subjects under consideration. A large number of delegations have submitted to the Commission working papers on different agenda items, which have been circulated. It is expected that more working papers will be submitted during the course of the deliberations of the four working groups. In this connection, I wish to urge delegations to submit their papers to the Secretariat as soon as possible for timely processing.

REPORTS BY CHAIRMEN OF WORKING GROUPS

The CHAIRMAN: As I pointed out at our last plenary meeting, held on Tuesday 23 April, this meeting will be devoted to the progress reports of the chairmen of the working groups on their work on the respective agenda items.

I now call on the Chairman of Working Group I, Ambassador André Erdös of Hungary.

Mr. ERDOS (Hungary): Out of the four subsidiary bodies established for the 1991 session of the Disarmament Commission, only Working Group I, dealing with agenda item 4, "Objective information on military matters", had a legacy from the previous session. Last year, a consultation group with a tightly restricted mandate and time limit conducted a general exchange of views and then defined a set of basic positions on the main topics of the issue of objective information on military matters.

(Mr. Erdös, Hungary)

On that basis, Working Group I was able, without any delay, to launch its discussion of specific questions, which were outlined in an introductory round-up by the Chairman at the first meeting, on 24 April. Copies of that round-up were made available for later reference, and a draft programme of work was also put forward at the same meeting. Following substantive discussion and some modification, the work programme was adopted.

Delegations in the Working Group are fully agreed on the utility of concerted efforts and on the possibility of achieving, before the end of the 1992 session, the results expected of the Group and of the Commission. This agreement was clearly discernible in the course of the second and third meetings of the Working Group, at which the first part, tentatively entitled "Objectives", of a future report was discussed.

Today, debate will start on the second part, called "Priniciples", and, towards the end of this week, the Group will take up "Scope". Finally, discussions will concentrate on "Machinery", including also the possible role of the United Nations in any set-up proposed in connection with objective information on military matters.

Sufficient time has been allotted for a résumé of work, as well as for the consideration and adoption of the Working Group's report to the Commission.

The CHAIRMAN: I now call on the representative of Egypt, who will speak on behalf of Ambassador Moussa, Chairman of Working Group II.

Mr. SHOUKRY (Egypt): On behalf of Ambassador Moussa, who, owing to unforeseen circumstances, could not attend this plenary meeting of the Disarmament Commission, I should like to present a report on the work of Working Group II.

(Mr. Shoukry, Egypt)

We have held four meetings of the Working Group on the process of nuclear disarmament in the framework of international peace and security with the objective of the elimination of nuclear weapons. Two of them were devoted to a general exchange of views, and today we began the detailed debate, in accordance with the Chairman's proposed structure of work, focussing on the first of four points.

These points include: first, the relationship between the process of nuclear disarmament and international peace and security; secondly, review of the steps taken in the process of nuclear disarmament; thirdly, strengthening the process of nuclear disarmament, and the necessary conditions and mechanisms required for it; and, fourthly, the role of the United Nations system in the process of nuclear disarmament with the objective of the elimination of nuclear weapons.

(Mr. Shoukry, Egypt)

A number of delegations have taken part in the discussions, which have been substantive and forward-looking. Today in particular, delegations focussed on the first item in the structure of work, and there was a lively debate on such issues as the non-proliferation régime, the doctrine of deterrence, the prevention of nuclear war, and nuclear disarmament. Also, a working paper was introduced by Argentina on the possibility of establishing multilateral nuclear warning and crisis-control centres, a proposal that was received with interest by the Working Group.

A number of delegations also suggested using the recent United Nations study on nuclear weapons as a reference point for the work of the Group, particularly regarding the discussion of nuclear weapons, disarmament and international security.

The Chairman of Working Group II intends to discuss a different item of the proposed structure each day. Delegations are of course welcome to comment on all four together if they should choose to do so. After hearing all delegations' comments on the four items in the proposed structure, the Chairman hopes to construct a factual report of the views expressed to serve as a guideline on the subject for the succeeding two years. Although delegations realize that the nuclear-arms question has a long history to it in the Disarmament Commission, delegations recognize the constraints due to the divergent viewpoints, and most delegations seem inclined to focus on areas where consensus may be reached.

The CHAIRMAN: I now call on the Chairman of Working Group III, Ambassador Nugroho Wisnumurti of Indonesia.

Mr. WISNUMURTI (Indonesia): Working Group III, which is mandated to address agenda item 6 of the Disarmament Commission - "Regional approach to disarmament within the context of global security" - has held four meetings.

In the first meeting, I introduced a non-paper containing a general structure, which I submitted to the Working Group for the sole purpose of facilitating the general exchange of views to be held at the next two meetings. Preliminary views were expressed by delegations on the non-paper and suggestions were made concerning certain aspects contained therein. The non-paper was generally accepted as guidelines offered by the Chairman for the general exchange of views.

In the next two meetings, the Working Group held a general exchange of views on the agenda item, during which substantive ideas and proposals were made and further comments on the Chairman's non-paper were expressed. Working papers were also introduced to the meeting. Certain aspects addressed by delegations include the relationship between a regional approach to disarmament and global security and disarmament efforts; experiences in the regional efforts towards disarmament in different regions; basic principles, criteria and guidelines for a regional approach to disarmament; the establishment of zones of peace and zones free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction; confidence- and security-building measures; and the possible role of the United Nations in regional efforts towards disarmament.

The fourth meeting of the Working Group, which took place this morning, heard further statements from delegations addressing specific aspects of the agenda item. Working papers were also introduced at that meeting. Working

(Mr. Wisnumurti, Indonesia)

Group III having completed its general exchange of views, its next meeting, tomorrow, will have a more focussed discussion on some of the substantive aspects of the agenda item.

I conclude by expressing my sincere appreciation to the delegations for having contributed to the work of Working Group III. I certainly hope for their further cooperation and contributions, which will facilitate the achievement of our common objectives in the Working Group.

The CHAIRMAN: I now call on the Chairman of Working Group IV, Ambassador de Araujo Castro of Brazil.

Mr. de ARAUJO CASTRO (Brazil): I am pleased to report to you, Sir, and to the plenary of the Disarmament Commission that Working Group IV has started its work in what I feel to be a very constructive and encouraging spirit. I am confident that this spirit will prevail throughout the next two weeks and that we will be able to achieve at least some measure of progress by the end of the session.

Working Group IV was, as members know, entrusted with the task of examining item 7 of our agenda, entitled "The role of science and technology in the context of international security, disarmament and other related fields". It is indeed a complex, wide-ranging and certainly a most challenging mandate, encompassing matters that had never before been dealt with in a systematic debate in an intergovernmental body of universal composition.

In accordance with the document on ways and means to enhance the functioning of the Disarmament Commission, the Working Group will have up to three consecutive years to deal with the item. It was felt in the Group that the 1991 session should be dedicated to what might be defined as brainstorming

(Mr. de Araujo Castro, Brazil)

on the different aspects of the issues involved so that by the end of this session we may have defined the basis for the more detailed work - the drafting of specific recommendations and guidelines - to be carried out in the remaining two years.

For this purpose, it was decided that we would hold a structured debate, beginning with a general exchange of views on the work of the Group and on all aspects of the item on our agenda, as provided for in the "ways and means" document. The next step would be to examine each of four different substantive aspects of the item that were identified, during the course of informal consultations, as aspects that fall within the mandate of Working Group IV and that the Working Group could and should consider. These four aspects or sub-items are, first, scientific and technological developments and their impact on international security; second, science and technology for disarmament; third, the role of science and technology in other related fields; and fourth, the transfer of high technology with military applications.

Under the first sub-item, the Working Group will consider the possibility of building on the ground established in resolutions 43/77 A, 44/118 A and 45/60, and in the reports of the Secretary-General contained in documents A/44/487 and Add. 1 and 2, and A/45/568, all of which carry the title "scientific and technological developments and their impact on international security".

Under the second sub-item, we will be dealing with the subject matter of resolutions 44/118 B and 45/61, entitled "Science and technology for disarmament", which refer to the use of scientific and technological achievements for disarmament-related purposes, such as verification, weapons disposal and the conversion of military industry to civilian purposes.

(Mr. de Araujo Castro, Brazil)

Under the third sub-item, we will deal with the "other related fields" mentioned in the title of agenda item 7. This would cover areas such as the utilization of resources currently allocated to military activities for promoting civilian endeavours to protect the environment, as provided for in resolution 45/58 N. As was suggested during the general exchange of views, it would also cover other civilian uses, such as the application of military technology for purposes connected with the promotion of economic and social development.

(Mr. de Araujo Castro, Brazil)

Under the fourth sub-item the Working Group will seek to respond to the suggestion made by the Secretary-General in his report to the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly on the work of the Organization, in which he suggested:

"that the international community make a special effort to clarify the important issues involved" -

in the question of the transfer of high technology that may be used for military applications, and -

"to produce clear and fair guidelines acceptable to all." (A/45/1, p. 20)

It is clearly understood that acceptance of this programme of work for the Working Group cannot in any manner be interpreted as prejudicing the positions of individual delegations on these questions or on the different resolutions adopted by the General Assembly.

As provided in the general programme of work for this session of the Commission in document A/CN.10/1991/CRP.1, Working Group IV has so far held a total of three meetings. At the first meeting, on 24 April, we dealt with the organization of our work for this session and began the general exchange of views, which continued through the following two meetings of the Working Group on 25 and 26 April.

Bearing in mind the fact that we are dealing with a new item that covers a rather wide range of subjects and issues, the general exchange of views was, I believe, quite useful. It permitted delegations to express their opinions and to make specific suggestions and proposals on the different substantive issues involved. It also gave delegations the opportunity to state their views on how, and on which specific questions, they felt the Group might most usefully concentrate its attention in this and in coming sessions of the Disarmament Commission.

(Mr. de Araujo Castro, Brazil)

In the course of the general exchange of views three working papers were presented or announced.

The delegation of India presented a working paper (A/CN.10/147) that refers to the question of scientific and technological developments and their impact on international security. The working paper contains, inter alia, comments on the components and implications of the qualitative arms race and specific suggestions for action in six different fields.

The delegation of China announced the presentation of a working paper, which has been distributed as document A/CN.10/150, which expresses in eight points its views and suggestions on different aspects of the question of the role of science and technology in the context of international security, disarmament and other related fields.

The delegations of Argentina and Brazil presented a working paper (A/CN.10/145) on the question of the international transfer of sensitive technologies, the annex to which contains a set of draft guidelines for the regulation of international transfers of high-technology products, services and know-how that may be used for weapons of mass destruction.

It is my understanding that other delegations may soon be presenting other working papers that, together with the three I have just mentioned, will surely help the Working Group better to focus its work.

Immediately following this meeting Working Group IV will meet in this room to begin a more focused consideration of each of the four sub-items, one after the other. After concluding this first round of preliminary discussions we intend to return to sub-items 1 to 4 in an attempt to identify in a more detailed manner the areas of general agreement and differences of opinion, with a view to the preparation of the Chairman's report on the work of Working Group IV during the 1991 session of the Disarmament Commission.

(Mr. de Araujo Castro, Brazil)

As I stated at the beginning of my statement, I am encouraged by the way in which the Group has started to tackle its work, and I hope to be able to report back to the Commission on the progress achieved during this session by Working Group IV in dealing with the challenging mandate with which it has been entrusted, in particular by pointing the way, as clearly as possible, towards the substantive work to be carried out in the next two years.

The CHAIRMAN: We have completed the first round of reports of progress on various agenda items. As indicated in the adopted general programme of work (A/CN.10/1991/CRP.1), the second progress reports will be made by chairmen of various working groups at the Commission's next meeting in the afternoon of Monday, 6 May 1991.

The meeting rose at 3.45 p.m.